

OCC1 443 CONSTRUCTING MENTAL HEALTH

Credits: 3

Instructor: Hiba Zafran, MSc., PhD (on leave)
Occupational Therapist-Psychotherapist

Zachary Boychuck, erg. PhD Candidate
Office: H201 (specific office hours to be posted)
zachary.boychuck@mcgill.ca

Prerequisite: OCC-245 & POTH-250

Course Description: This course provides foundational knowledge for occupational therapy practice in psychiatry from a historical and critical perspective. Students will have the opportunity to develop mental health literacy, and apply previously learned concepts for occupation-focused reasoning in the domain of mental illness and mental health.

Expanded Course Description: This course is designed for occupational therapy students in the undergraduate program. Students will acquire foundational knowledge about mental health and mental illness across the lifespan. They will also begin to analyze the impacts of having a psychiatric condition, as well as being labeled as ‘mentally ill’, on engagement, occupational performance, and opportunities for participation. Students will be introduced to the historical and scientific creation of psychiatric categories, controversies about psychiatric diagnoses, and debates about the potential to pathologize everyday culturally-informed responses to life events. This will include an exploration of their own values and assumptions about what constitutes mental health, mental illness, and optimal functioning.

The course is guided by the first priority of the Mental Health Commission of Canada’s national strategy to promote mental health and reduce stigma. Particular attention is paid to priorities 1.1.2 & 1.1.3 to “Increase people’s understanding of how to improve their own mental health... [and] to recognize mental health problems and illnesses, how to get support if they need it, and how to get help for someone else” in everyday settings, particularly in schools*. Thus, there will be an emphasis on the mental health literacy aspects of health promotion for students to develop knowledge and skills for detecting and coping with mental health issues, including accessing community resources, for their own lives as future therapists.

Course Structure : The course is implemented twice per week, for 1.5 hours each, through the winter semester. Self-directed learning is expected through interactive instructional activities. Lecturing is minimized (maximum of 30 minutes/class).

*http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/filefield_private_download/MHStrategy_Strategy_ENG_0.pdf

Instructional Strategies: Students will engage in a collective learning process. Students will be expected to complete the required readings and/or viewings prior to coming to class and be prepared to discuss and engage in various learning activities (reflective writing and/or art, group dialogue and debate, group learning-through-doing, and use of technology for collaborative learning as appropriate etc....). Students will be offered modeling and explicit guidance to continue developing the following professional skills for the OT profile roles of communicator, collaborator, scholarly practitioner and professional**:

- a) Searching, summarizing and presenting the literature
- b) Practice in articulating and debating the conflicting evidence and viewpoints about mental illness in scientific and testimonial literature
- c) Receiving and responding to potentially emotional or stigmatizing notions about what constitutes 'normalcy' and mental health, while maintaining confidentiality
- d) Questioning one's own ideas, values and/or assumptions about mental health and mental illness
- e) Inferring the potential effects of social attitudes towards mental illness on the OT profile roles
- f) Translating the impact of values and assumptions on occupational performance (of self and others)

Further, students will have the opportunity to practice occupation-based reasoning by applying OT concepts to first-person stories of individuals experiencing mental illness.

For students to be encouraged to share their experiences, thoughts and opinions within a respectful environment, the following professional behaviors are expected throughout the course¹

- Agree to disagree
- To disagree with an idea/opinion, not the whole person
- To practice listening to others' points of views
- To communicate with respect

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Name and distinguish the different categories and labels of mental illness across the lifespan.
2. Describe the importance of history, particular controversies, and stigmas surrounding the contested nature of mental illness.
3. Compare and contrast the difference between mental health promotion and the medical diagnosis of a mental illness.
4. Explain why genealogical and cultural perspectives are integral to this domain of OT practice.
5. Identify signs and situations indicative of the risk of developing mental health issues.
6. Problem-solve and share a repertoire of skills and resources to foster one's own, and each other's, mental health.

** <http://www.caot.ca/pdfs/otprofile.pdf>

¹ Please refer to the Diversity Statement below

7. Outline the impact of mental illness on occupational engagement and performance for a given client.
8. Actively interrogate assumptions and beliefs about mental health and illness to promote skills for reflective learning and practice.

Content

Weeks 1-2

- 1) Introduction to the course, expectations
 - Warm-up introductory activity
 - Discussion about what is mental health, mental illness, psychiatric diagnosis / dysfunction
 - Activity to explore potential causes and mediators of mental health/illness
- 2) The grey and social nature of mental illness
 - Stress-vulnerability, biopsychosocial theories, changes across DSM 1-5
 - Discussion in relation to the 'grey' nature of mental illness: Use 'depression' as an example
 - Stigma, culture and our assumptions about mental health/illness
 - Mental health in student's lives

For each of the following topics students are expected to attend class having completed the required readings and/or viewings and/or assigned preparatory work in subgroups to discuss and engage in activities that cover:

- How the psychiatric diagnostic category is currently defined and constructed
- Historical and cross-cultural controversies and debates in the definition
- What are the bio-psycho-social (cultural-political-spiritual-natural environment) causes
- Our own constructions (assumptions/experiences) about the psychiatric category
- Impact on (my) everyday life /early detection
- Coping strategies / available resources

Weeks 2 – 11

- 3) Anxiety & Depression
- 4) Addictions
- 5) Psychological trauma
- 6) Eating disorders
- 7) Personality disorders, suicide and self-harm
- 8) Psychosis: Schizophrenia and Mania
- 9) Child and adolescent mental health
- 10) Psychogeriatrics
- 11) Complex realities: Comorbidities and Culture bound syndromes

Week 12

- 12) Occupational therapy: reflections / synthesis
 - Role of OT in mental health vs. in psychiatry
 - Review of reflective journals, changes in attitudes / perceptions, things learnt, personal experiences
 - CRW: based on a movie clip to review and apply core course concepts

Final week

Group presentations

Course Materials

Required Text: Bonder, B. (2014). Psychopathology and Function, Fifth Edition. Thorofare, NJ: Slack, Inc.

Articles, handouts, web links and other material will be posted on the course website. Resource material will also be available online and/or on reserve at the library.
Course pack-TBA

Copyright of course materials: Instructor generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

Evaluation

50% Individual work:

Reflective journal assignments comprising formative and summative evaluations. Reflection through achievement of student-driven learning objectives will be emphasized. (30%)

In-class mid-term quizzes on content (2 x 10%)

50% Group work:

Theme-based student-led discussions and/or debates (10%)

Formative constructive peer feedback (10%)

Final first-person story based group project and presentations (30%)

N.B. Please come speak to the instructor if your group prefers to present the final project in French.

Diversity Statement: The Occupational Therapy Program recognizes our responsibility to foster a learning environment where students and instructors can engage in dialogue and exchange ideas without being made to feel unwelcome or disrespected in view of their identity or beliefs. The Program intends that the instructional design of all courses minimize any barriers to participation, particularly barriers based on age, biological sex, disability, gender identity or expression, indigenous ancestry, linguistic and cultural background, race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political views/opinions/ideologies, and any other aspect integral to one's personhood. We therefore recognize our responsibility, both individual and collective, to strive to establish and maintain a respectful environment that is free from discrimination.

Disability: If you have a disability please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#) at 514-398-6009 before you do this.

Right to submit in English or French written work that is to be graded: In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded, except in courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives. Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque

étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

Special Requirements for Course Completion and Program Continuation: In order to pass the course, a grade of at least C+ (60%) must be obtained as a total course mark. Please refer to the appropriate sections in the undergraduate calendar on University regulations regarding final and supplemental examinations. This course falls under the regulation concerning individual and group evaluation. Please refer to the section on marks in the Rules and Regulations for Student Evaluation and Promotion of the Occupational Therapy Course Guides.

Skills building attendance mark: Attendance at all classes is required. A student cannot miss more than 15% of the classes (i.e. more than 2 per term) without an acceptable written excuse. If he or she misses more than the permitted number of sessions, 10% of the total course mark will be removed.

Consequences of not completing assignments as requested: Students who do not hand in assignments on time will lose 10% of the total mark for the assignment for each day the project is overdue.

Professional Conduct: Professionalism and accountability are expected throughout the course of the semester. This includes the on-going respectful nature of teacher-student as well as student-student interactions.

Dress Code: Professionalism with respect to dressing is encouraged throughout the course of the semester. It is each student's responsibility to have appropriate attire during all class assignments and learning activities. When working with simulated patients student must be dressed professionally.

Technology in Class: Your respectful attentive presence is expected, therefore while you are permitted to use your laptop in class, it is understood that you will not be using your laptop or cell-phone for social purposes during class time (e.g. email, msn, sms). Your cell phone should be on silence during class time and phone calls should only take place during the break or after class.

Plagiarism/Academic Integrity: [Amended by Senate on April 17, 2013]: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le [Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires](#).

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.